

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #1529/01 3630938  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 290938Z DEC 09  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3015  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9586  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0973

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 001529

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/P, EAP/PD - THOMAS HAMM  
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. BEEF IMPORTS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused December 29 news coverage on Taiwan's economy, which showed signs of sustained recovery for the first time in 25 months; on the aftermath of the fourth round of cross-Straits negotiations; and on the discussion in the Legislative Yuan regarding possible legislation restricting U.S. beef imports. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" provided several principles for the Taiwan government and public to "fight against" the U.S.-Taiwan beef deal. An op-ed in the pro-unification "United Daily News," however, urged the legislators from both the ruling and opposition parties not to oppose the deal just for the sake of opposition. End summary.

A) "The Key to Fight against the [U.S.-Taiwan] Beef [Deal] Lies in the Last Paragraph of the Protocol"

Former Environmental Protection Administration Minister Winston Dang opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] (12/29):

"When the time has come for the final stage of law amendments concerning U.S. beef [imports], the Ma administration still hopes to use [the phrase] offshore [beef] 'inspection' to replace that of 'blocking [U.S. beef] outside the border.' The Ma administration has also continued to call on the public in a threatening tone....to jointly assume the burden of the consequences of offending the United States. The following principles are provided for the [public's] reference to teach them how to fight against the 'beef' [deal]:

"First, fighting a decisive battle outside the border: As for national security, the best policy for [maintaining] food safety is to fight a decisive battle outside the border. U.S. beef has been regarded as a food product harmful to people's health, so it leaves [us] no other options but to amend the laws to block it outside the border and to start renegotiating [a new deal]. Second, do not make [the wording] vague: When it comes to 'inspection,' it is unlikely that the U.S. government will allow 'any foreigner or foreign officials' to exercise such authority that is exclusive to U.S. officials. ... Third, do not fear [U.S.] retaliation: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the United States will likely adopt 'economic retaliation' [against Taiwan], such as refusing to resume talks under the Taiwan-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). But according to former [Taiwan] officials stationed in the United States, Taipei and Washington have had digital video conferences on TIFA since 2007; what the two sides lacked was just sitting down and talking face-to-face with each other.

"Fourth, do not be worried about the U.S. attitude: The U.S. side is clearly aware that blocking [U.S. beef] outside the border will only cause them to lose....approximately US\$2 million. By imposing 'economic retaliation' or by 'not supporting Taiwan's participation in international organizations' for such a small amount of money, it will trigger a backlash from the Taiwan public and push them to refuse to eat U.S. beef all the more (which will end up being a [much larger] loss, including both boneless and bone-in beef). What

is worse is that it will likely spark anti-U.S. sentiment, which is rare among the Taiwan people. Fifth, it is all about Ma again: U.S. beef is a simple food safety issue. Yet it is the ignorance and arrogance of [Taiwan's] National Security Council (NSC) officials in charge of the [U.S.-Taiwan beef] deal; their disregard for the importance of communication and transparency concerning the risks of food safety policies; and their black-box operations, which have set off the anti-U.S. beef sentiment in society. Washington should be clearly aware that it is all about 'Ma,' not the 'beef.'

"Sixth, do not let others look down on us: The series of administrative measures adopted by the Department of Health are merely moves centering on technically interfering [with the U.S. beef imports] -- an attempt to make up for the mistakes the NSC has made. Such childish, petty tricks or playing with words will not only waste the taxpayers' money but also violate the Taiwan-U.S. [beef] protocol, the commitments made under the World Trade Organization, and the foundation of mutual trust built upon the international practices. Such moves by the Ma administration, which is feeling good about itself, will only make foreigners look down on us.

"Seventh, [now] is a good opportunity for renegotiating [with the United States]: In fact, according to the last paragraph of the [U.S.-Taiwan beef] protocol -- 'shall hold consultations within 180 days of the effective date of the protocol to review its implementation,' both sides can take this opportunity to review [the deal] in an effort to prevent any controversy caused by the failure to communicate [thoroughly] over the possible risks. ..."

B) "No U.S. Beef, and No ECFA; What Does Taiwan Want?"

Professor Edward Chen from Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies opined in the mass-circulation "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (12/29):

"... With regard to the U.S. beef issue, it is true that the [Taiwan] government had a lapse in communicating sufficiently within the government itself and with the Legislative Yuan. When it comes to the matter of [signing] the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) [with China], the [Taiwan] government also fell short in communicating with the ruling and opposition parties and making publicity that hit the mark. Nonetheless, both the ruling and opposition legislators must not oppose [the U.S.-Taiwan beef deal and ECFA] just for the sake of opposition, because Taiwan cannot afford to have neither the U.S. beef deal nor ECFA -- that would mean opposing both the United States and China. For the ruling party legislators in particular, they must never abandon their party line, because if our country is beaten, all our people will suffer."

MADISON